Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the above-identified application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended)   An apparatus comprising:

at least N parallel gain stages, each gain stage having an input and an output, wherein:

each gain stage is individually driven at its input by only one of X related spatial channels, ~~and~~

each gain stage produces at its output an amplitude adjusted version of the only one of X related spatial channels,

each gain stage having a gain adjusted independently of the gain of the other N-1 gain stages, wherein N and X are integers, N is greater than 4, and X is one of equal to and not equal to N; and

a circuit that downmixes the outputs of the N parallel gain stages to M channels, wherein M is an integer greater than 0 and less than N.

2. (original)   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the N parallel gain stages are user-adjusted.

3. (canceled)

4. (original)   The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the X related spatial channels are a left, right, center, right surround, and left surround channels of an audio program.

5. (original)   The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the X related spatial channels further include a low frequency effects channel of the audio program.

6. (original)   A method comprising:

adjusting an amplitude of at least one of X related spatial channels to create X adjusted

spatial channels; and

downmixing the X adjusted spatial channels to M channels, wherein X is an integer greater than 4 and M is an integer greater than 0 and less than X, and wherein adjusting precedes downmixing.

7. (original)   The method of claim 6, wherein adjusting is controlled by an end-user.

8. (original)   The method of claim 6, wherein one of the X related spatial channels is a primary audio channel and at least one of the other of the X related spatial channels is a remaining audio channel.

9. (original)   The method according to claim 8, further comprising:

comparing the primary audio channel with at least the remaining audio channel to determine a ratio of the primary audio channel to at least the remaining audio channel; and

automatically adjusting one of the primary audio channel and the remaining audio channel when a predetermined value for the ratio is not met.